9 February 2015

Mr Patrick Seares

Chief Executive Officer

Western Australia Marine Science Institution

WAMSI HQ, M095 University of Western Australia

35 Stirling Highway, Crawley WA 6009

Dear Mr Seares

**WALGA’s Submission on the WA Marine Science Blueprint 2050**

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Western Australian Local Government Association (the Association) to comment on the WA Marine Science Institute’s Blueprint 2050 (the Blueprint) through the Coastal Local Government Workshop held late last year and the current consultation process.

The Association is the united voice of Local Government in Western Australia. The Association is an independent, membership-based group representing and supporting the work and interests of 138 Local Governments in Western Australia.

**General Comment**

As outlined in the Climate Council’s recent report *Counting the Cost: Climate Change and Coastal Flooding*, “Australia is highly vulnerable to increasing coastal flooding because our cities, towns and critical infrastructure are mainly located on the coast. Australia’s infrastructure has been built previously for a stable climate with ranges of variability and is unprepared for the unstable climate system and the rising sea level.[[1]](#footnote-1)”

Local Governments and coastal land managers are at the forefront of coastal land use planning and decision making; this responsibility will only increase in response to the projected impact of climate change.

**The Association supports:**

* the Blueprint’s aim to be an “end-user driven plan for physical, chemical, biological and social scientific research that is designed to address the currently known knowledge needs of sectors that interact with, and managers of, the Western Australian marine environment.”

The Association believes that Western Australian Marine Science Institute’s (WAMSI) research can play an important role in supporting the sector with future coastal planning and decision making.

* the Blueprint’s aim to be a living document that is reviewed every five years.

The intention to periodically review the Blueprint is important, due to the unpredictable and increasing impacts of climate change, such as coastal inundation and erosion due to the sea level rising and the increase of damaging storm surges.

**The Association would like to suggest:**

* that additional consultation is undertaken with relevant not-for-profit marine conservation organisations.

The Blueprint has a strong focus on economic development, with a range of stakeholders from various industries. The Association supports sustainable coastal development and therefore suggests that additional consultation be undertaken with relevant not-for-profit marine organisations such as Coastcare Groups. This would provide a balance between identified research gaps that relate to conservation issues and research gaps that relate to development or industry projects.

* that research from the community perspective is considered and prioritised.

The Blueprint highlights a particular research focus to support various sectors’ ”social license to operate[[2]](#footnote-2)” within the marine and coastal environment and outlines the need for “enhanced understanding of the social (cultural and recreational), economic and environmental values.”

The Association suggests that there is some additional scope within WAMSI’s future research priorities to expand research regarding an industry’s social license to operate to include a greater emphasis on community values.

Research from Curtin University investigates the idea that, “communities are likely to resist those changes that most impact on the existing coastal values and character. Put a different way, communities are more likely to accept changes that acknowledge, respect and are consistent with existing coastal values and character.[[3]](#footnote-3)” WAMSI may like to investigate whether there are opportunities to build or expand on the existing community values research to ensure the organisation is taking a triple bottom line approach to research within the marine environment.

* that WAMSI consider the Local Government sector when determining partners for research projects.

As the closest tier of government to the community, Local Government can provide an ideal link with community and local business. By partnering with Local Government, WAMSI can ensure that community values and research needs are balanced alongside economic values and industry research.

* that an emphasis is placed on communicating WAMSI’s research findings.

It is important that WAMSI communicates their relevant research findings to end users. This could be done through a number of methods including information sharing events, or having research available through a user friendly online portal.

**Relevant Research Areas**

The Blueprint already captures a number of knowledge needs that were raised at the Coastal Local Government Workshop. The Association would like to reiterate these specifically within this submission.

Knowledge needs, relevant to the Local Government sector includes:

* oceanographic modelling, such as sediment budgets, sand supply-distribution patterns, wave data and high resolution bathymetry:
* determining the respective legal liability with respect to pre-emptive measures to manage or mitigate the impacts of coastal inundation, erosion and sedimentation:
* the likely impact of climate change projections on rising sea levels on coastal inundation to inform coastal planning and infrastructure, and
* the social, environmental and economic values of the community that ascribe to the coastal environment.

**Conclusion**

As previously discussed at the Coastal Local Government Workshop, Local Governments are increasingly at the forefront of coastal planning and decision making. As coastal managers they are obliged to consider climate change impacts within their coastal plans and decision making. This is detailed within the State Planning Policy 2.6 and the supporting Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Planning Guidelines.

There is an opportunity for WAMSI’s ongoing research, as outlined within the Blueprint, to provide information to support and inform future coastal planning and decision making to a range of end users including the Local Government sector.

For enquiries please contact Caroline Perks Climate Change Coordinator, on telephone 9213 2049, or email cperks@walga.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

Mark Batty

Executive Manager – Environment and Waste

TO DELETE ALL TEXT THAT IS NOT REQUIRED, SIMPLY HIGHLIGHT IT AND PRESS DELETE, OR OVERTYPE.

1. Climate Council. 2013. *Counting the Costs: Climate Change and Coastal Flooding.* Last Accessed on 6 February 2015 from <http://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/56812f1261b168e02032126342619dad.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Australian Venture Consultants. 2015. *Western Australian Marine Science Blueprint – Consultation Draft (p70). Last Accessed 9 February 2015 from* [*http://www.wamsi.org.au/a-blueprint-marine-science*](http://www.wamsi.org.au/a-blueprint-marine-science) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Curtin University. 2013 *Coastal Character and Values Study – Stage one study of four case studies in Western Australia.* Last Accessed 6 February 2015 from <http://www.garrymiddle.com/Coastal_Communities/coastal-character-and-value.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)